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ELECTRICITY.

Why It Is Difficult For the Layman to Understand What It Is.

"What is electricity?" is a favorite query with people who desire to "get a rise" out of a scientific man. And when he fails to answer it in the same simple fashion that he might treat the question "What is a biscuit?" the questioner cries out: "Aha! You profess to know all about electricity. Why, you can't even tell what it is!"

Now, to "tell what a thing is"—that is, to define it—is to state its relations with something more familiar. The particular familiar thing that the questioner is thinking of in this case is ordinary matter. Heat has been explained to him as a vibration of material particles. Light, he has been told, is a wave motion in the ether, and he understands the ether to be a kind of matter or a substance resembling matter in some particulars.

It is not to be denied that no such simple general relationship can be stated between electricity and matter. But, this being so, it would be just as correct to say that we do not know what matter is as that we do not know what electricity is. As a matter of fact, we do not know what matter is, and the latest plausible theory of it builds it up on an electric basis, so that on this theory the idea of electricity is more fundamental than that of matter. Unfortunately our senses have been evolved by contact with matter and are trained to detect only matter. Electricity they know only secondarily, through its action upon matter—the light or heat that it causes matter to give out, the attraction that it causes certain substances to exert, and so on. To the man in the street, therefore, matter is familiar, and he demands a statement of the latter in terms of the former, illogical though this may be. After the scientist has stated all this the reply comes back, "Yes, I understand all that, and it is most clear, I am sure, but tell me, then, what is electricity anyway?"

Another source of confusion to the lay mind is that scientific men do not always use the word "electricity" to mean the same thing. The engineer often employs it to express the thing that the theoretical electrician calls "electric energy."

To find the energy of electricity—that is, its ability to do work—the electrician multiplies the quantity of electricity by the potential or tension under which it exists. But to the engineer this product itself measures the thing that he calls "electricity."

The work that a pound of water may do by falling a foot is one foot pound. The water is the same after falling as before, though its energy is less. So to the electrician a quantity of electricity at 100 volts is precisely the same as at one volt, though the former is able to do a hundred times as much work.

This difference in meaning causes thousands of disputes among students. "Electricity is a form of energy," says one, "just like light or heat." "Oh, no!" is the reply. "It is not energy at all, though it may possess or convey energy." One disputant is talking about the electricity of the physical and the other about that of the engineer; hence their dispute is merely a matter of definition, though they do not know it. What wonder that some people are still content to regard the whole subject as a civilized Mumbo Jumbo?—St. Louis Republic.

Difficult to Catch.



New Member (who desires to be clubbable, to old member)—Do you fish? Old Member (who hasn't been into society)—What for?—Sketch.

A DIAMOND STORY.

The Way a Russian Princess Disposes of Her Jewels.

A few years ago Ludwig Nissen, a well known wholesale dealer of the Maiden lane district, was in the office of a diamond merchant in London when a stranger came in and offered an unusually beautiful stone for sale. The Englishman did not care to buy. But Nissen thought he saw a bargain. But he was not willing to buy until he learned who owned the stone and where it had come from. The man said he represented a friend, a woman, who did not care to have her name disclosed. The American was firm. If he could not learn the owner's name he would not buy. The stranger said he would see the woman and talk the matter over with her.

The next day he came back and took Mr. Nissen to the woman's home. She lived in a handsome apartment in one of the most fashionable quarters of the city. It turned out that she was a Russian princess who, with her husband and her daughter, had been driven from Russia for having taken part in a nihilist movement. Of all their large property they had saved only their jewels. She opened a little safe and showed the American one of the finest collections of diamonds he had ever seen. They were worth \$200,000 or \$300,000.

"We sell them a few at a time," she explained, "just enough of them each year to give us a living. Perhaps you will wonder why we don't sell them all and live on the interest of the money? But my husband has the gambler's spirit. The money would not last a year. So we part from them piecemeal. I estimate that there are enough of them to keep us twenty years, and I don't expect to live longer than that."

One of those diamonds forms the centerpiece of one of the most valuable necklaces in New York. A few others are sent to this country every year. In the "diamond horse-shoe" at the opera there is never a night when there are not some of the jewels of the exiled princess on view.—New York Tribune.

Time, Not Space.

Mrs. Frink was a trusting soul and rarely questioned the opinions of others about matters concerning which they were supposed to be informed. One day she came home with a new pair of shoes under her arm. "Got them at Bride's," she explained, "and they're the best I ever bought you."

"What is so very good about them?" inquired her son, for whom the shoes were intended.

"Why, the salesman said that you could walk farther in them than in any others without getting tired, and I said that you couldn't walk very far just now on account of your knee, you know, and he said that he meant farther for the same distance. So I bought them, and here they are. Save the string, please."

She did not notice the smile on her son's face as he undid the package, and he was spared the trouble of explaining.—Youth's Companion.

Redeeming Time.

Dean Swift, when he claimed the degree of A. B., was so deficient as to obtain it only by "special favor," a term used to denote lack of merit. Of this disgrace he was so ashamed that he resolved to study eight hours a day; and he continued this industry for seven years, with what improvement is sufficiently known. This part of his history deserves to be remembered. It may, says a commentator, afford useful admonition to young men who, having lost one part of life in idleness and pleasure, are tempted to throw away the remainder of it.

Pure Milk.

"Have you thrown the cow into the antiseptic tank?"
"Yes."
"Have you washed the can with carbolic acid solution?"
"I have."
"Have you plunged into the germ destroying bath yourself?"
"Certainly!"
"All right. Go ahead, now, and take the cow into the airtight glass cage, but keep on the lookout that no stray bacteria get into the milk."—Bohemian.

TRICK SHOOTING.

The Way Some of the Stage Feats Are Accomplished.

When a champion rifle shot fires blindfolded at a wedding ring or a penny held between his wife's thumb and finger or seated back to her shoots, by means of a mirror, at an apple upon her head or at a fork held in her teeth, the danger of using a bullet is obvious. None, of course, is needed. The explosion is enough. The apple is already prepared, having been cut into pieces and stuck together with an adhesive substance, and a thread with a knot at the end, pulled through it from the "wings," so that it flies to bits when the gun is fired, is "how it is done."

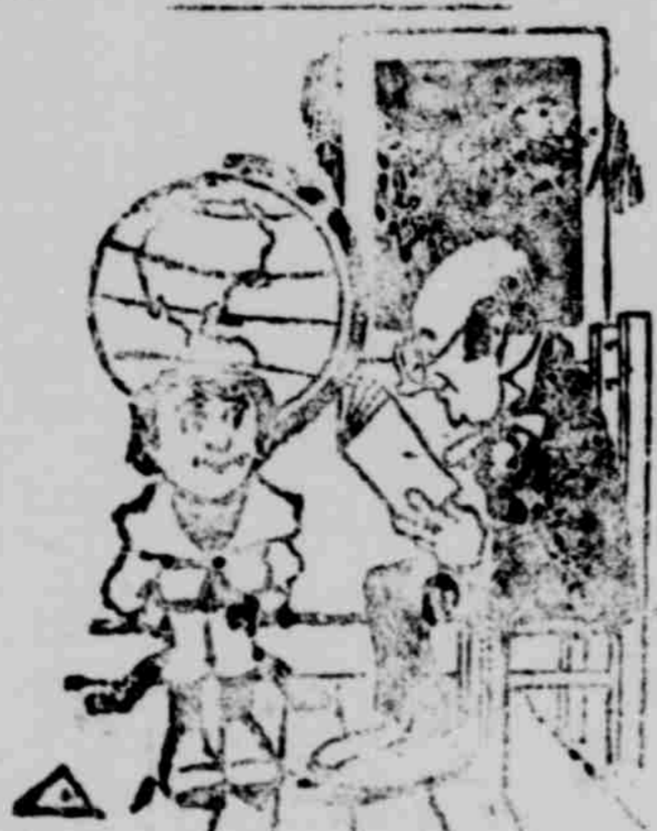
Generally the more dangerous feat appears the more carefully is all danger guarded against. In the "William Tell" act the thread is often tied to the assistant's foot. When, again, the ash is shot off a cigar which the assistant is smoking a piece of wire is pushed by his tongue through a hollow passage in the cigar, thus thrusting off the ash at the moment of firing.

A favorite but simple trick is the shooting from some distance at an orange held in a lady's hand. Great applause is invariably forthcoming when the bullet drops out on her cutting open the fruit. It is inserted by hand earlier in the evening.

Another popular trick is that of snuffing out lighted candles. Half a dozen are placed in front of a screen, in which as many small holes are bored, one against each candle wick. At the moment of firing a confederate behind the screen sharply blows out each candle with a pair of bellows.

In most instances where a ball or other object has to be broken on a living person's head blank cartridge is used and the effect produced by other means. A special wig with a spring concealed in it worked by a wire under the clothes is generally used, the confederate manipulating the spring simultaneously with the firing of the rifle. As the ball is of extremely thin glass, a mere touch suffices to shatter it.

In these exhibitions some of the rifle "experts" invite gentlemen from the audience to testify that the weapon is indeed loaded. The cartridge shown looks very well, but it is a shell of thin wax blackened to resemble a leaden bullet. It would not hurt a fly.—London Tit-Bits.



Teacher—What is the longest name you ever read?
Bobby—Impressment of the Hannan Company of London.

"Are all your boys drinking money?"
"No, only three. Two were shot by the baron while he was hunting, and one was run over by an automobile. They all received pensions, but my other boy is good for nothing."—Fleegende Blätter.

Grubworm Races.

An odd form of animal contest used to be practiced by office clerks in London some years ago. It was known as grub racing, and nearly every younger clerk had his stable of racers. These worms were bred in nuts or apples and carefully stabled between two walnut shells. They were selected by placing them in the center of a piece of paper, and the one that proved most adept in making a speedy bee line to the edge of the paper was matched against the pick of a rival stable. Some of the fastest could not be induced to travel in a straight line. In racing parlance, they bolted and were bad betting propositions. But when two came together that showed a disposition to run straight and true the betting on the result was lively enough to stir up the anti-gambling enthusiasts.—New York Tribune.

POI IN HAWAII.

This Peculiar Food Is to the Native as Bread Is to Us.

What bread is to the American European poi is to the native Hawaiian. No meal is complete without it, and for the great majority of the natives it forms the principal article of diet. While they probably could at the present time live without this accustomed dish, the time once was, before the advent of the whites to the islands and the introduction of new foods, that life without it would at least have been precarious.

Poi is made from the tuberous root of the taro plant, a species of the caladium family, of which the well known elephant ear plant is also a member. The tuber, which averages in size that of a large sweet potato, is baked and afterward pounded up with water until a smooth white paste is obtained, much resembling a wheat flour paste, except that the color is pale pink or purple, dependent upon the variety of taro used. The paste is allowed to slightly ferment or sour, when it is ready for use. In olden times each family prepared its own poi, the work being done by the men, as in fact were most other cooking operations. At the present time poi factories in which machinery grinds the taro and mixes it on a large scale have largely supplanted the old hand method. The Chinese of the territory have come to be the leading manufacturers of the product.

Many of the white residents of the islands eat poi to almost the extent as the natives, but the taste is largely acquired, and strangers seldom care for it. Poi has a high food value, and, since it formed the principal article of diet of the old Hawaiians, some persons have credited it with the splendid physical development of the race.

Poi was always eaten from wooden bowls, or calabashes, and was conveyed to the mouth by the fingers, one, two or three being employed, according to the consistency of the food, which also establishes a designation of one, two or three finger poi. White poi eaters now usually employ a fork or spoon in lieu of fingers, although it is still common even in the highest families to give native dinners, or luaus, at which knives and forks are tabooed and fingers only used. There is as much etiquette among the Hawaiians in eating with the fingers as with modern table implements, and the graceful motion by which a portion of poi is twisted upon the fingers and transferred to the mouth would not shock the sensibilities of the most refined. An invitation to a real luau, at which poi, baked pig, fish baked in leaves and coconut in various forms form the principal part of the menu, is something that is always looked forward to by every visitor to Hawaii and always pleasantly remembered afterward.

Absentminded.



The Professor—Yes, hello, is this Jones' lamp store? No, I can't tell you the size of the shade, but here's the lamp.—Harper's Weekly.

Partners.



"Before I engage you I must tell you my husband is very particular and very cross."
"Don't fear. Between us we'll manage him."—Fleegende Blätter.

DEVICES OF THE BODY.

The Cough, Sneezes and Sigh Are Measures of Self Protection.

One of the most interesting facts about the human body is its power of self preservation—its power of evading or overcoming the thousand and one conditions which, unless corrected, would be injurious or destructive.

Among the most common of these acts of self preservation are the cough, the sneeze and the sigh. Every one is familiar with these acts, yet few people ever ask themselves the cause, and fewer still could explain them.

One of the simplest of the body's devices for self protection is the cough. The cough is merely a blast of air propelled from the lungs in such a manner as to forcibly dislodge some foreign substance which has been drawn into the throat, the windpipe or the tubes leading to the lungs.

The membranes lining these parts of the body are very sensitive, and when a foreign matter comes in contact with them an alarm message is at once sent to the nervous "headquarters," and the result is the sudden, spasmodic expulsion of breath which is called a cough.

Very often the cough is produced by the irritation of the accumulation of mucus on the surface mentioned. In this case, as in the case of a foreign body, the cough is merely a means of expelling the matter.

So, you see, a cough is merely one of nature's methods of self protection. Cough cures contain some drug which, by paralyzing the nerves, prevents the cough and allows the mucus to accumulate.

Thus the cough medicine does only harm. The cure for a cough is to cough—to cough until the excessive deposit is removed. Meantime, of course, measures should be taken to prevent added deposits.

A sneeze is exactly like a cough, save that the obstruction occurs in the nostrils owing to the deposit of some irritant or foreign matter and that the blast of air is thrown out through the nose instead of through the throat and mouth.

Why do we sigh? When grieved or depressed the tendency is to hold the breath. This means that the body suffers for oxygen, and the long, deep breath which we call a sigh is merely a means by which the body obtains for itself the necessary amount of oxygen.—Dr. W. R. C. Latson in Health Culture.

Curing a Doctor.

An eminent physician of London, who was remarkable for continuing his visits to his rich patients after he had turned their disorders out of doors, attended a lady of some celebrity in the world of wit for three months after her recovery and regularly stayed with her until, in the English manner, he received his dismissing fee of 5 guineas. Weary of his expensive calls and concluding that to lessen the fee would be to lose the visitor, she ventured to give him 4 guineas at the conclusion of his next call. He looked anxiously in his hand, then on the carpet and stood for some time in evident embarrassment.

"Have you lost anything?" inquired the lady.

"Why, madam, I thought I had dropped a guinea."

"It is only a mistake in the person, sir," rejoined the fair patient. "It is I who have dropped the guinea."

The doctor, of course, dropped his visits.

The Vacation Season.



Wife—You run on in front, John, and get the tickets.

A WARNING.

The Utter Uselessness of Taking a Course in German.

A customer during a trying on asked her dressmaker, whose son was at college, if he were pursuing a general course or specializing in any particular branch. The answer came promptly, through a mouthful of pins:

"Sanskrit, ma'am. He's specializing in Sanskrit. I can't say but I'd have preferred something a bit more usual in the way of education—something more plain tailor made for every day like. Sanskrit's such a fussy study."

Her criticism, if oddly worded, was comprehensible and not unintelligent. Less reasonable and equally unexpected were the remarks of an old farmer in a remote hill village upon the favorite studies of his son. He had always been suspicious of the higher education and was far from pleased when his Joe, whom he wished to keep on the farm, obtained a scholarship.

"Languages may be all right for folks that's born to 'em in foreign parts," he declared recently, with impressive deliberation, "but a man that ain't had better talk plain Yankee and do things."

"To see that boy of mine sit down with a book ye can't read, saying over words ye can't sense—jest putter, putter, mutter, mutter, sputter, sputter—why, it makes me fair sick. And for all he's been at it most a year, he can't make those Italians on the highway understand three words together. He owns himself he can't."

"It is Italian he is studying, then?" the listener murmured politely.

"No, 'tain't it; it's German," admitted the old man in a reluctant growl. "But a precious poor excuse I call that, and so I told him."

"I don't care if 'tain't their own lingo, Joe," says I. "It oughter come a long sight higher to it than jest United States talk. Squeezed all up together the way folks be on the map o' Europe, course they must get used to each others' talk enough to make each other out."

"Bet ye my Sunday-go-to-meeting bet," I told him, "if ye talked reel German to those Italians they'd understand ye!"

"But he can't. All he can do is to set in a corner with his book, putter puttering and sputter sputtering."

"Don't ye talk to me about colleges! Joe's a warning."—Youth's Companion.

Dead to the World.



Humorist—I've just written fifteen jokes on the man who doesn't advertise.

Poet—That's wrong. You shouldn't jest about the dead.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Mr. Meenly—It's something dreadful. My wife is always asking me for money. It's money, money, money, all the time.

Mr. Japson—Why, whatever does she say with all this money?

Mr. Meenly—Eh? Oh, I don't know. I haven't given her any yet.

Proved Her a Flirt.

Senator Penrose at the dedication of Pennsylvania's splendid capitol at Harrisburg said of a certain speech that had been made at a private dinner before the dedicatory ceremonies:

"That speech was pregnant with meaning. It revealed in every sentence its author's character. Brief and full and illuminating, it reminded me of the beautiful young lady who murmured to herself one afternoon as she paused uncertainly on a street corner:

"What a bore! For the life of me I can't remember whether I'm to meet Morris in Tasker street or Tasker in Morris street."